

Handcuffs in Harrisburg

When a major Federal case is built upon the broad ground of conspiracy, it is likely to involve an equally broad range of people and institutions. Some may be only remotely related to the indictment, yet they can be caught up in the dragnet of eavesdropping and informers—and find themselves in handcuffs on the way to jail.

This is precisely what happened last Friday to Mrs. Zoia Horn, former assistant librarian and head of the reference department at Bucknell University. "Take her away!" said United States District Judge R. Dixon Herman at the trial of the Rev. Philip Berrigan and six other defendants in Harrisburg, Pa. She had declined to testify as a matter of principle, though granted immunity, because she resented the fact that "spies" were sent into her home and library.

Her imprisonment as a dangerous criminal came before the hearing was even over and before various milder options could be explored legally. She was branded in contempt of court for the duration of the trial and held up as a warning to future witnesses. Although defense counsel had offered to stipulate her previous testimony before a grand jury, the Government prosecutor and judge were adamant.

Today in the Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, an attempt will be made to reverse the order for contempt. That court already has overruled the trial judge's denial of bail, thus permitting Mrs. Horn's release after three days in jail. It is difficult to see how justice will be advanced by further victimizing a librarian whose name appears in no indictment and who is admittedly a peripheral figure in this harsh and divisive politico-legal melodrama.